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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/RA, AND OES  
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SUBJECT: U.S.-Jordan Joint Committee Meeting Forms Seven Working Groups for Science and Technology Cooperation

REF: 07 AMMAN 2606

11. Summary: The first meeting of Jordan-United States Joint Committee on Science and Technology Cooperation (JCM) resulted in new energy initiatives, enhanced collaboration on environmental issues, and the formation of seven separate working groups on water, environment, energy, agriculture, education, health, and innovation. Dr. Anwar Battikhi, Secretary General of the Higher Council for Science and Technology, and Ambassador Reno Harnish, Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, co-chaired the JCM which included representatives from nine USG agencies and the National Academy of Sciences. The two-day event also received significant local media coverage. American and Jordanian participants considered the JCM a success; however, real success will depend in large measure on the traction and collaborations that can be established by the working groups. Full text of the JCM statement can be found in paragraph 8. End Summary.

JCM Identifies Priorities for S&T Collaboration  
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12. The Jordan-United States Joint Committee on Science and Technology Cooperation (JCM) held its first meeting July 9-10, 2008, at the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST). Dr. Anwar Battikhi, HCST Secretary General, and Ambassador Reno Harnish, Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, served as the co-chairs for this first meeting resulting from the U.S.-Jordan S&T Agreement which entered into force June 12, 2007 (reftel). The co-chairs signed a Joint Statement at the closing session on July 10.

13. The JCM reaffirmed the shared goal to enhance science and technology (S&T) cooperation. It also established as the areas of highest priority water, environment, energy, agriculture, education, and health, and established seven working groups to convene regularly through email and conference calls and report back to the larger body. The Committee agreed to focus on commercialization and entrepreneurial partnerships between the two countries' respective S&T communities. The meetings, which attracted significant local media coverage, were intense and deemed a resounding success by the participants. A comprehensive list of areas for future collaboration were summarized in the Joint Statement released on July 10 (paragraph 8).

14. The ESTH Officer at Embassy/Amman provided the JCM with an overview of many ongoing U.S.-Jordan ESTH collaborations. In addition to confirming continued support for these ongoing engagements, several new U.S. proposed initiatives were presented at the JCM, including:

-- Energy: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) proposed assisting the Government of Jordan (GOJ) to develop an energy ratings system. A DOE workshop would provide the GOJ and the private sector with the necessary tools to determine energy savings against less efficient alternatives, consistent with DOE's Energy Star Program. The ESTH Officer also highlighted USAID's energy program and \$6 million allocation in FY 08 to commence pilot projects in the energy sector;

-- Seismology: The Air Force Technical Applications Center (AFTAC) proposed supporting Jordan in the installation and operation of the first seismic array in Jordan. The proposal for roughly \$3 million in equipment and technical assistance would enhance Jordan's seismic monitoring capabilities while supporting Nuclear Test Ban Treaty monitoring by AFTAC;

-- Environment: Collaborations commencing shortly include additional capacity building for Jordan's environmental regulators at the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), the Environmental Rangers, and judges to enforce Jordan's environmental laws. Through the Embassy Science Fellow program, Post will assist the MOE in planning the rehabilitation of environmental hotspots such as the Russeifah

AMMAN 00002154 002 OF 006

landfill site.

-- Standards: The National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) proposed a workshop to discuss the establishment of a regional science and technology training center in Jordan through a partnership with HCST and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS). The regional center would build upon the many regional training programs NIST has already undertaken in Jordan with the Jordan National Metrology Institute and the Jordan Institute of Standards and Metrology.

-- Innovation: Dr. Battikhi will support efforts to launch the Jordan Science and Technology Initiative pilot with the Institute for Capital and Creativity (IC2) affiliated with the University of Texas at Austin to develop commercialization strategies for 20 Jordanian innovations. The innovation working group will explore training opportunities on the patenting process as well as pre and post patent procedures.

15. Comment: While the S&T agreement has no associated funding, it is expected that the working groups will identify the highest priority projects and submit funding requests to the relevant U.S. agencies. The Joint Statement reflects the many ongoing and planned collaborations between the two countries, as well as the many areas of concern where the Jordanians want to collaborate with the U.S. The ongoing challenge will be for the working groups to convene regularly, gain traction, weed through the long list of priorities, and ensure the genuine top priorities can result in meaningful funded projects. End comment.

Broad Participation from U.S. and Jordan

16. The Joint Committee was composed of participants from U.S. and Jordanian science and technology-focused government agencies as well as academia, civil society organizations, and private sector representatives. The 18-member U.S. Delegation included representatives from nine government agencies as well as the National Academy of Sciences: the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce, the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Geological Survey,

and USAID. GOJ participants included the heads of all the HCST departments, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. Approximately 40 experts also attended, including scientists from the RSS, several academic institutions, as well as civil society organizations.

17. Also in attendance as observers were representatives from the American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan, the USAID Sustainable Achievement of Business Expansion and Quality (SABEQ) Program, the Civilian Research Development Foundation, and the private sector. The presence of business representatives underscored the importance the JCM places on innovation and commercialization of technologies, as a means of sustaining and expanding S&T capacity-building in Jordan.

#### Joint Statement Text -----

18. The following is the text of the Joint Statement:

The Jordan-United States Joint Committee on Science and Technology Cooperation held its first meeting (JCM) on July 9-10, 2008, at the headquarters of the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) in Amman, Jordan. The co-chairs of the JCM, Dr. Anwar Battikhi, Secretary General of the HCST, and Ambassador Reno Harnish, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Environment and Science, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks.

The Joint Committee is composed of representatives from U.S. and Jordanian science and technology (S&T)-focused government agencies.

AMMAN 00002154 003 OF 006

Also in attendance as observers were representatives from the American Jordan Chamber of Commerce, the USAID/SABEQ Program, and the Civilian Research and Development Foundation. The presence of business representatives at the JCM underscores the importance that the United States and Jordan place on innovation and commercialization of technologies, using entrepreneurial partnerships as a means of sustaining and expanding S&T capacity building in Jordan.

The Joint Committee will meet at regular intervals under the framework of the Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation between the United States and Jordan that came into effect in June 2007. The Committee's purpose is to enhance cooperation in areas of science and technology, higher education, and engineering, and to strengthen the capacity of education, research, and innovation between U.S. and Jordanian technical agencies, institutions of higher education, and research establishments - in the specific areas of highest priority such as water, environment, energy, agriculture, education, health, and innovation. The Joint Committee is also mandated to enable commercialization and entrepreneurial partnerships between the two countries' respective S&T communities. The Joint Committee discussed the following areas of cooperation and agreed to explore further and expanded cooperation in them:

#### Innovation and Commercialization -----

The Committee discussed Jordan's interest in expanding its innovation capacity to maintain a competitive edge in a global economy. Recent steps to advance this goal have been the establishment of a network of technology incubators including I-Park, an incubator for information and communication technology (ICT) start-ups, and the creation of the Trilateral Industrial Development Fund (TRIDE) that serves as a catalyst for joint research and development among other funds. Jordan received significant praise for its newly established Scientific Research Fund, for scientific endeavors, financially supported by an allocation of 1% of publicly traded company profits. In order to meet the challenges of investing in commercialization of innovation, the Joint Committee recommended immediate investment in skills and in Research and Development (R&D), attraction of foreign investment,

and creation of further incentives for innovation. The Committee agreed to consider launching the Jordan Science and Technology Initiative (JSTI) pilot to develop commercialization strategies for 20 Jordanian innovations and to explore cooperation in training on the patenting process as well as pre and post patent procedures.

## Energy -----

The Joint Committee applauded the Jordanian pledge made at the Washington International Renewable Energy Conference in March 2008 to target 10% of its energy needs being met by renewable energy sources by 2020 and noted the recent decisions to exempt all renewable energy equipment from import duties and taxes. USAID Jordan completed an assessment of the energy sector in April 2008 and based on this assessment is ready to support the GOJ in areas such as advancing energy efficiency and conservation; promoting a supportive, incentive based regulatory climate for demand-side management; supporting public-private partnerships in large-scale renewables and utilities markets; and improving access to credit for energy efficiency and renewables. USAID support will include a \$6 million allocation in 2008 to commence pilot activities on public awareness campaigns, study tours, training and technical assistance.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) will assist the GOJ develop an Energy Ratings system in partnership with the National Fenestration Ratings Council to provide the foundation for any energy efficient program including for windows, walls, foundations, roofs, doors, appliances and other products. This workshop would provide the GOJ and the private sector with the tools to determine energy savings against less efficient alternatives. This program is in keeping with DOE's Energy Star Program. DOE will also facilitate the GOJ engaging in partnerships with appropriate International Energy Agency (IEA) Implementing Agreements (IAs). IA technology groups

AMMAN 00002154 004 OF 006

include solar systems, wind turbine systems, photo voltaic systems, ocean energy, biomass and geothermal R&D. These IAs provide cost sharing, task sharing, harmonization of technical standards, stronger combined R&D capabilities, boosting trade and technology transfer.

## Education -----

The Committee highlighted Jordan's leadership role in higher education in the Middle East. Members discussed several measures to strengthen science education in the Jordanian education system. In the basic education sector the Committee agreed to explore cooperation in non-traditional teaching methods to improve critical thinking and problem solving skills. In the higher education system in Jordan, cooperation proposes to focus on improving support for the continuous research engagement of faculty and encouraging them to provide research results that will address the social needs of Jordan.

## Seismology -----

The Committee discussed a U.S. proposal to collaborate with Jordan in the installation and operation of the first seismic array in Jordan. The proposal for roughly \$3 million in equipment and technical assistance would enhance Jordan's seismic monitoring capabilities while sharing data for the benefit of both countries. A working group will focus on this collaboration and conduct the noise survey, agree on a location, and jointly install the station.

## Water -----

The working group will explore collaborations in conducting evaluations and assessments of all water assets in Jordan, which includes water quality and quantity using all of the data resources including remote sensing and in situ sensors. The prime objective is

to introduce an improved water budget estimation procedure which will incorporate both water quality and quantity. The procedure will help match different qualities of water resources to the suitable type of use. Such a tool will also be beneficial in tracking possible changes in water budget elements as a result of climate change and droughts, and will consider all budget elements including green water.

Climate change (CC) is expected to have significant negative impacts on Jordan. Possible collaboration areas could be development of protocols and tools for the assessment of the impacts of CC on water resources, quality of the environment, human health, and development of adaptation programs to alleviate impacts of CC.

Another area of collaboration could include developing water resources management tools for both the water quantity and quality aspects.

#### Environmental Protection

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The Joint Committee reviewed the significant on-going cooperation on environmental issues between the two governments and civil society to promote improved environmental management and conservation of natural resources. Environmental protection efforts include strengthening biodiversity conservation and protected area management, supporting capacity building for the enforcement of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) rules, as well as additional efforts to promote eco-tourism in Jordan. Some of the pre-established concrete collaborations that will commence shortly include additional capacity building for Jordan's environmental regulators in the Ministry of the Environment, the Environmental Rangers, judges to enforce Jordan's environmental laws, and the finalization of bylaws relating to the Jordan Environment Fund (to promote environmental compliance) and the Inspection process. The United States will assist the Ministry of Environment, through the Embassy Science Fellow program, to plan the rehabilitation of environmental hotspots such as the Russeifah landfill site.

AMMAN 00002154 005 OF 006

Participants praised the many personnel exchanges between the United States and Jordan which allow each side to benefit from the other's experiences. In addition to the capacity building training program, Jordan will be sending several high level Environmental Rangers officials to participate in a study tour in October. Two Jordanians are currently taking part in U.S. National Parks Fellowships to enhance biodiversity management skills; several members of the Ministry of Environment will be attending an environmental economics course at Stanford University; there have been several U.S. International Visitor Program exchanges related to environment, and water resource issues; and a Jordanian delegation will join regional colleagues at a global Water Reuse in Agriculture conference in the U.S. in October 2008. The United States will also continue bringing scientists to Jordan through its speakers programs and science fellow programs to consult with and guide Jordanian counterparts on specific scientific issues.

#### Agriculture

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Due to the severe shortage of water resources, programs and activities related to water reuse and water use efficiencies in agriculture are a top cooperation priority for the Joint Committee. The problem has been more recently exacerbated by considerable urban expansion to arable land. Recent developments in the worldwide food crisis have precipitated an increase in the price of feed for livestock, prompting the agricultural research sector to focus new efforts on alternative feed possibilities. The Committee further suggested joint explorations for wild crop relatives, local horticultural varieties as well as seed production as mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. Other potential cooperation areas are botanical inventories of crop relatives, development of a plant genetic resources collection, repatriation of germplasm originating in Jordan, food quality assurance capacity-building, natural resource management of soil and water using remote-sensing technology and the impact of climate change on agriculture.

## Health

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Jordan faces challenges in the health sector due to rising rates of chronic preventable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, tobacco-related illnesses and environmental illnesses, shortages in its public health force and no dedicated public health education program for research on areas such as mental health. In addition, the relatively high fertility rate threatens continued improvement in health and standards of living and high mortality rates persist among newborns. Issues related to patient and health care worker safety are of concern since these are costly and may lead to excess morbidity and mortality. Jordan offers attractive opportunities for mutually beneficial research areas such as stem cell research, due to legal protection for these endeavors, and genome association due to genetically isolated populations. The Committee explored cooperation to further develop public health education programs, improve public health workforce capacity-building and enhance research efforts into pediatrics, mental health, genetics, nutrition, standardization of medical records, and health research methodology.

Jordan has one of the highest rates of traffic accidents in the world, increasing yearly along with associated fatalities. Recognizing the importance of road safety for the economic growth and development of Jordan, the JCM agreed to explore collaborations on improving road safety in areas such as strengthening data collection and analysis for improving road safety, traffic law enforcement, public communications and messaging to improve behavior in support of safer road use by drivers and pedestrians, developing trauma care systems and emergency medical care services, and roadway safety infrastructure improvements to enhance the safety of all road users.

## Joint Research

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The Joint Committee highlighted the continued progress of the USAID

AMMAN 00002154 006 OF 006

Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) program through which Jordanian researchers have been able to collaborate with hundreds of other Arab and Israeli researchers over the last few decades. MERC is currently funding a record 25 active applied research grants for Jordanian scientists from government, academia, and civil society to collaborate on applied research with regional peers in the areas of water, environment, health, agriculture, and geology. Future cooperation will consider creating a regional science and technology training center in Jordan through a National Institute for Standards and Technology/ Civilian Research and Development Foundation partnership with the HCST and exploring ways to encourage sabbatical and scholar exchange programs.

The Joint Committee has established working groups on specific cooperation areas to consider how best to further joint activities and identify programs to recommend to the Joint Committee to achieve the goals and objectives agreed upon at this first meeting. These working groups will be made up of small numbers of Jordanian and American scientists and researchers who will work together remotely and report back to the Joint Committee at a later time.

The next JCM is proposed to take place in the United States in [1](#)2010.

Signed on July 10, 2008, by

/s/

/s/

Dr. Anwar Battikhi      Reno L. Harnish  
Secretary-General, Higher Council Principal Deputy  
for Science and Technology      Assistant Secretary, U.S. Dept. of  
State

planning, attending, and holding a successful JCM.

¶10. This message was cleared by OES/STC.

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